

**DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**

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AUG 07 2006

Mr. Val Dolcini  
Chairman of the Board  
Yolo Basin Foundation Board of Directors  
Post Office Box 943  
Davis, California 95617

Dear Mr. Dolcini:

This is in reply to your letter of January 27, 2006 to Ryan Broddrick, Director of the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and me calling our attention to the complex issues involved in considering proposals to improve fish habitat in the Yolo Bypass. Your letter identified that your primary concerns are potential effects of fish passage improvements and enhanced spring inundation of Yolo Bypass for fish habitat as the Department of Water Resources (DWR) works to implement CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program milestones.

I will respond to the issues you raised that are directed at DWR's activities. DWR has been working to promote fish passage improvements and floodplain habitat enhancements for native fish in the Yolo Bypass. As your letter indicated, research has shown that winter and spring flooding provides valuable floodplain habitat for splittail and juvenile salmon in the Yolo Bypass, and may stimulate the Delta food web.

Regarding your concerns about enhanced spring inundation in response to feedback from stakeholders, DWR has restricted our conceptual timeframe and potential locations for intentional augmentation of seasonal floodplain inundation for native fish. Mr. Dave Feliz, Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Manager, and other stakeholder participants in the Yolo Bypass Working Group have indicated that flooding after March 15 or April 1 interferes with planned dry land uses. Current DWR proposals for seasonal fish habitat are thus confined in duration to no later than March 15 or April 1, on the lands of willing participants. Like the Delta Smelt Action Plan co-authored by DWR and DFG, which considers using managed wetlands to enhance the Delta food web, current concepts of seasonal floodplain inundation for fish are limited both spatially and temporally to avoid negatively affecting stakeholders.

Mr. Val Dolcini, Chairman

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At the December 12, 2005 public scoping meeting, DFG solicited comments for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Land Management Plan. DWR responded by commending DFG's innovative management of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area to date, and suggested ways that support of native fish could be integrated into the new Land Management Plan. These suggestions included provision of localized seasonal flooded habitat along low lying areas adjacent to the Toe Drain and a more natural creek bed connecting the last reach of Putah Creek to the Toe Drain. DWR is pleased that DFG does plan to improve Putah Creek fish passage and habitat, via a more natural course, in a way that is compatible with operation of the check dam for irrigation impoundment.

Regarding fish passage, DWR and DFG have been participating in an interagency work group to identify concepts to help fish migrating through the Yolo Bypass to the Sacramento River in a way that is compatible with existing downstream uses. Fremont Weir, located in the northern Yolo Bypass, impedes the upstream passage of sturgeon in particular. DWR believes that fish passage could be improved without additional flooding of existing land uses. We are in the process of developing information that will more definitively respond to many of your questions and concerns to improve fish passage opportunities without negatively affecting stakeholders.

DWR appreciates the opportunities that the Yolo Basin Foundation and Yolo Bypass Working Group have offered to facilitate communication with Yolo Bypass stakeholders, and would be pleased to give an update on our progress toward identifying native fish habitat and passage improvements that are compatible with the other important uses of the Yolo Bypass.

If you need additional information or would like to discuss this further, please call Marianne Kirkland, Senior Engineer with DWR's Division of Environmental Services at (916) 227-1310.

Sincerely,

Original signed by  
Lester A. Snow

Lester A. Snow  
Director

cc: (See attached list.)

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